

Commissioned Officer

STUDENT TRAINING AND EXTERN PROGRAM

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DURING the 1957 summer months, 120 students from 67 approved professional schools of medicine, dentistry, engineering, and science spent their vacations as Public Health Service Reserve Officers on active duty under the Commissioned Officer Student Training and Extern Program, a career development program known as COSTEP.

COSTEP offers second-year and third-year medical, dental, and engineering students, and science students at the graduate level, on-the-job training in Public Health Service assignments commensurate with their education. These young men and women are thus able to further their professional knowledge and gain experience while earning a salary during breaks in the academic year.

A program must have a purpose, and COSTEP has four:

1. To interest promising students in careers in the Public Health Service.
2. To assist students in furthering their professional knowledge while earning a salary.
3. To give students an opportunity to learn about the functions of governmental health agencies at the National, State, and local levels.
4. To provide the Service with competent personnel during vacation periods.

Last summer's group of 120 students was the largest in the training program's brief history and the first group to participate in the program since it went on a 12-month schedule. The Service has been employing students during the summer months since 1948, when 49 medical students were appointed Reserve Officers in the

Service's Commissioned Corps and called to active duty during school vacations. The commissions were terminated, however, when the students returned to school in the fall. This procedure was repeated in 1949 and 1950.

During the 1951-54 period, dental, engineering, and graduate science students, in addition to medical students, were employed during the summer months under the civil service system. In 1955, students accepted for the Summer Student Program—as it was then known—were appointed to the Commissioned Reserve (the inactive duty reserve component of the Commissioned Corps) and called to active duty when the spring semester ended.

Last year, the program was officially designated as COSTEP, and on July 1, 1957, went on a 12-month basis. This permits students attending schools on the quarter system, with vacations at times other than the summer months, to receive Service assignments during their free periods. As an added inducement, students still in school who have satisfactorily completed a COSTEP assignment are eligible to apply for reassignment the following year.

Assignments

Research assignments under COSTEP are available at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Md., the Communicable Disease Center in Atlanta, Ga., the Sanitary Engineering Center in Cincinnati, Ohio, or in Public Health

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Service field activities elsewhere in the country.

Clinical assignments are available in several of the Service's 16 general and specialty hospitals and many of its 55 hospitals maintained for American Indians and Alaska natives.

Students interested in preventive medicine may be assigned to a wide variety of public health programs in many parts of the country. They participate in communicable disease control, sanitary engineering activities, general epidemiology, accident prevention, air pollution control, chronic disease control, occupational health programs, tuberculosis control, venereal disease control, and other related activities.

Second-year students, as a rule, are assigned to research activities. Third-year medical and dental students are usually given preference for clinical clerkships or preventive medicine assignments, but are not excluded from research work. Assignments to clinical clerkships in Alaska are given only to students who are able to serve at least 90 days on active duty.

By category, assignments are generally as follows:

Medical students are assigned to the Service's general and specialty hospitals (up to 1,250-bed capacity) and to its Indian hospitals in the United States and Alaska. They may engage in employee health programs or become research assistants in preventive medicine activities. Some are assigned to mental health studies, and others become research assistants in pharmacology, biochemistry, psychology, metabolic studies, neuropsychology, neurochemistry, and related fields of medical-biological research.

Dental students perform essential duties as research assistants in genetics, biochemistry, and bacteriology. They serve in the dental clinics of the Service's general and specialty hospitals and Indian hospitals. They assist regional dental consultants, work on fluoride analysis, and do field X-ray work.

Engineering students are employed in water pollution control programs, radiological health research, and field engineering for water and sewerage facilities on Indian reservations. Engineering students also work on field survey teams and assist in planning and engineering construction, and in air-conditioning design, construction, and maintenance. Assignments

are also made in insectborne and rodentborne disease control activities.

Science students are offered a variety of assignments. These include cell production and tissue culture, chemistry laboratory work, medical entomology, rabies or psittacosis studies, biological control of mosquitoes, animal psychology, sociology and anthropology, psychiatric aide assistants, social psychology aides, and mental health surveys.

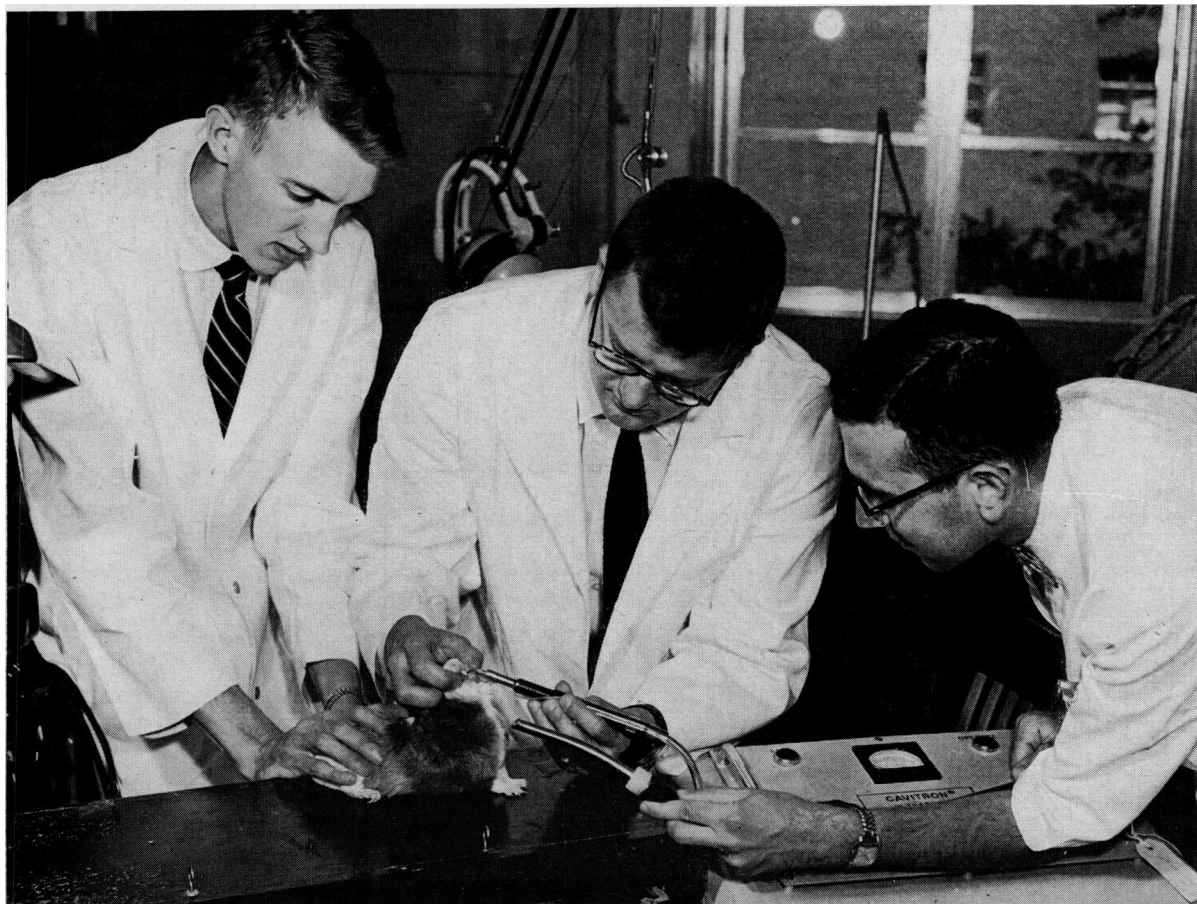
Last summer, one medical student served as assistant to the anesthesiologists in the Clinical Center, National Institutes of Health. Five medical and four dental students took medical histories, performed physical examinations, and conducted hematological studies among 5,000 inhabitants of an in-married population group in an intensive genetic field study of the prevalence of hereditary disease. A science student interested in immunology received instruction in the testing of diagnostic reagents and blood-banking procedures. A psychology student participated in studies of the treatment of children with primary behavioral disturbances.

One of the engineering students reviewed construction plans of oceangoing vessels to determine if they conformed to Public Health Service sanitation standards for water supply and distribution, food preparation, storage, and serving areas, and ratproofing. Other engineering students assisted Service engineers in survey work for water and sewerage improvements on an Indian reservation in the southwest.

Requirements and Remuneration

To be eligible for the Commissioned Officer Student Training and Extern Program, a student must:

1. Be a United States citizen.
2. Be physically qualified for appointment as a Public Health Service Reserve Officer.
3. Have completed at least 2 years of approved professional schooling by the end of the current academic year or, in the case of science students, be at the graduate school level.
4. Submit official transcripts covering undergraduate study.
5. Be recommended by a dean or department head.



Dental student (left) watches trial of a new drill on a hamster at the National Institute of Dental Research.

Students who are commissioned in the Public Health Service and called to active duty under COSTEP receive the pay and allowances of a junior assistant sanitarian, the Service officer grade equivalent to Army 2d lieutenant and Navy ensign. In addition, they are reimbursed for travel from the points at which they receive their calls to active duty to their assignments, and back to the points of origin. The monthly pay and allowances for a junior assistant sanitarian with less than 2 years cumulative service are:

	<i>With depend- ents</i>	<i>Without depend- ents</i>
Base pay-----	\$222. 30	\$222. 30
Quarters-----	85. 50	68. 40
Subsistence-----	47. 88	47. 88
Total-----	\$355. 68	\$338. 58

The Federal income tax, computed on base pay only, is withheld from each month's pay. Previous active and inactive duty with the Armed Forces, the Public Health Service, or the Coast Guard is counted toward longevity for pay purposes.

Students selected for COSTEP are appointed to the Commissioned Reserve and called to active duty for 60 to 90 days. Although leave is accumulated during the tour of duty, COSTEP students are not granted leave except for emergencies. At the end of the duty period, however, they are paid a lump sum for all accumulated leave.

After COSTEP

Students who perform satisfactorily may remain in the Commissioned Reserve pending

completion of professional education. Medical students retain their inactive duty status until they either apply for and are selected for Public Health Service internships or until they complete their intern training outside the Service. Those interning outside the Service, who have military obligations, are called to active duty at the completion of their internships or their commissions are terminated.

Dental students, at the completion of their professional education, may apply for either a Service dental internship or active duty as a staff dental officer.

Draft-eligible students who have satisfactorily completed COSTEP assignments may retain their reserve commissions until they receive their appropriate medical, dental, engineering, or science degrees. Once the degree is earned, the student's commission is terminated unless he applies for and receives an active duty assignment in the Public Health Service in order to fulfill Selective Service obligations. Engineer and science students who have satisfactorily completed a COSTEP assignment, and are still in school, are eligible to apply again for employment under the program.

Because the Commissioned Corps is one of the uniformed services of our country, the serving of specified amounts of time (up to 2 years) in the Corps satisfies military obligations under the Universal Military Training and Service Act. Service under COSTEP or as a Public Health Service intern, however, is not counted toward the satisfaction of military obligations.

Applications and Reserve Commissions

Students interested in COSTEP assignments during the summer months must submit their applications each year before February 1 to the Surgeon General, U. S. Public Health Service (P), Washington 25, D. C. Applications for assignment at other times of the year must be submitted at least 120 days beforehand.

It is not necessary for medical students to apply for COSTEP assignments in order to receive appointment to the Commissioned Reserve. Medical students interested in intern-

ships, active duty to fulfill Selective Service obligations, or careers in the Public Health Service may apply for appointment to the Commissioned Reserve any time after completing their first year of medical school. Dental, engineering, and science students, however, can receive reserve appointments only through COSTEP. Medical or dental students who have satisfactorily completed a Public Health Service internship are continued on active duty unless they request termination of their commissions. The Service imposes no mandatory period of duty upon its Commissioned Reserve officers.

COSTEP Survey

A survey of students who were employed under COSTEP during the summer months of 1957 disclosed that they found their assignments interesting and professionally valuable. Eighty-six percent indicated that they planned to apply for active duty in the Commissioned Corps after graduation. More than half of the group of 120—nearly all of whom are eligible for participation in 1958—are planning to apply again for COSTEP assignments. Most of the group felt that their assignments provided professional experience that would be helpful in school. Fifty-nine percent reported that they found their work "very interesting" and 71 percent found their professional education useful in their COSTEP assignments.

Features that many students named as advantages of the program were professional experience; working with congenial people; opportunity to learn new developments and exercise initiative; the ability, helpfulness, and interest of supervisors; and the opportunity to work with patients.

When asked what special efforts were made to aid in their professional development, the students mentioned the opportunity to attend hospital rounds outside their departments, outside reading and reporting to a group, attending clinical and pathology conferences, seminars, time for literature research, and the availability of experienced professional personnel to answer questions and discuss work.